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INFO RUCNSAD/SADC COLLECTIVE
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MASERU 000386

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
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DEPT FOR DS/IP/AF, DS/IP/ITA, DS/DSS/ODAC, S/CT, D, P, M, INR,
CA, AF/S

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [LT](#)

SUBJECT: MASERU EAC CONVENES PRIOR TO POSSIBLE JULY 5 PROTEST MARCH

REF: MASERU 379

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1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Charge d'Affaires, a.i. convened post EAC on July 3 to assess the mission's security posture and potential threats following the July 1 announcement of an unsanctioned July 5 political opposition protest march and sit-in scheduled to end at the Prime Minister's office (reftel and septel). EAC members agreed that there is no information to suggest that USG interests are the subject of hostile intentions and that no EAP tripwires had been crossed at present, but concurred with informing U.S. mission employees and U.S. citizens in Lesotho, reviewing security measures, and, in light of the Embassy's closure on July 4, taking preparatory measures in the event of disturbances or disruption of transportation services on July 5. EAC characterizes the current political climate as tense. END SUMMARY.

2. (SBU) On July 3, Embassy Maseru's EAC convened to assess mission's security posture and potential threats following the July 1 announcement of an unsanctioned July 5 political opposition protest march scheduled to end at the Prime Minister's office (reftel and septel). Charge, Peace Corps Director, Peace Corps APCD, A/MO (acting Post Security Officer), Consul, P/DEP Officer, HIV/AIDS Coordinator and IMO participated. The EAC reviewed the following developments:

- Opposition political parties have indicated their intention to conduct a mass march in central Maseru on Thursday July 5, culminating in delivery of a protest letter to the office of the Prime Minister located at the Qhobosheaneng Government Complex off Kingsway Avenue in downtown Maseru.
- Some opposition figures have indicated that marchers plan a "sit-in" at the Government Complex unless authorities address their grievances related to allegations of extrajudicial detention and mistreatment of opposition supporters (septel). Some opposition figures have also called on local transportation companies to ferry supporters to the march and to decline transportation for regular commuters going to and from their workplaces.
- Presently, the exact march route and the expected number of participants are unknown.
- Senior GOL officials have told diplomats that they will not permit the march and will take steps to prevent it if the political opposition proceeds as announced (septel). It is unclear whether march organizers will hold the event in the absence of official authorization.

3. (SBU) Embassy Maseru's EAC concluded that the mission's

current security posture, enhanced during a recent GOL-imposed curfew, is appropriate to address current conditions. Charge has apprised RSO (resident in Gaborone) of developments related to the march. EAC members concurred that no EAP tripwires had been crossed at the present time, but agreed that the potential for increased security concerns could arise if the march and/or sit-in occur, if transportation services are curtailed, and/or if GOL authorities take physical measures to prevent the march and sit-in.

¶4. (SBU) In light of the specific information currently available to post on the upcoming march, and the likelihood that detailed communication with all employees during the July 4 holiday will not be practical, the EAC decided to take the following actions:

- issue a security notice on July 3 to mission personnel regarding the potential for a protest march and disruption of transportation on July 5;
- in the absence of further developments, plan to open the U.S. Mission for business on July 5, but offer liberal leave to employees in the event of disturbances or difficulty commuting;
- proceed as planned with an official Independence Day reception at 12:00 noon on July 4 at the Lesotho Sun Hotel (270 invited guests);
- issue a warden message on July 3 to U.S. citizens based on the mission security notice;
- Peace Corps will review and adjust planned meetings and movements of volunteers and trainees scheduled for July 5-6;
- review emergency food and water supplies at chancery and alternative command posts;
- conduct a test of the emergency radio network on the morning of July 5.

¶5. (U) Post communication is normal at present. An IVG outage on July 1-3 was corrected on July 3. Local PTT, including landline and cellular networks, are functioning. The Embassy switchboard number is (+266) 22-312-666. Duty Officer phone is (+266) 5888 4035. Principal point of contact for security matters is Wendy

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Kahler, Acting Post Security Officer, who can be reached via the duty officer after hours.
MURPHY